

REMARKS

Claims 1, 6–10, 12–13, 25, 44 and 47–58 were previously pending in this Application. Claims 19–24 and 35–40 have been previously withdrawn. Claims 2–5, 11, 14–18, 26–34, 42–43 and 45–46 have been canceled without prejudice or disclaimer. Claim 41 remains allowed. Claims 59–64 have been added, and claims 1 and 25 have been amended herein. Applicants submit that no new matter has been added. Applicants respectfully request reconsideration of the Application in view of the foregoing amendments and the following remarks.

Examiner Correspondence

Applicants wish to thank the Examiner for the courtesy extended to Applicants' representatives on November 9–10, 2006 and November 27, 2006 when the representatives corresponded with the Examiner via facsimile and email regarding the July 28, 2006 Office Action. Applicants' representatives specifically inquired as to the following:

- (1) Although the Office Action states that Clitheros et al., U.S. Patent No. 4,564,410, discloses a processing head capable of changing its course of movement in response to being forced to move via the tip of the processing head contacting either of the side walls of a concave portion, Applicants could not find any such description in the Specification of Clitheros et al. and inquired as to why the Office Action indicates that the reference discloses this feature.
- (2) Although the Office Action states that Krueger et al., U.S. Patent No. 6,649,220, B1, discloses that "such movement of the slidably supported structure is solely and directly in response to movement of the processing device along the concave portion," Applicants could not find such a disclosure and inquired as to why the Office Action indicates that Krueger et al. discloses this feature.
- (3) Applicants' representatives asked the Examiner that if the term "concave portion" is broadly interpreted in the Office Action to include the configurations set forth in Krueger et al., i.e., an automobile window portion, is it possible to more narrowly define the "concave portion" so as to result in an allowance of the claims?

In response, the Examiner explained that with respect to inquiries (1) and (2), the limitation defines an intended method use which Krueger et al. is capable of performing and appears to disclose. More specifically, the Examiner indicated that the piston structure provides some capability to move, i.e., compliance, in response to the particular features of the material worked upon. The Examiner further stated that the compliance in Krueger et al. is an identical or substantially identical concept as Applicants' claimed movement, i.e., the compliance allows the tip to track the surface. With respect to inquire (3), the Examiner explained that limitations to the material worked upon generally do not limit apparatus claims.

Claim Rejections – 35 U.S.C. § 102

Claims 1, 6, 8–9, 12, 25, 44, 47–50, 52–53, 55 and 57–58 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being anticipated by Krueger et al., U.S. Patent No. 6,649,220 B1 or under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Krueger et al., WO 00/21684. Applicants respectfully submit that the pending claims are patentably distinct from the cited references.

Amended independent claim 1 recites, inter alia:

An apparatus for processing a portion of an automobile body . . . comprising . . . a processing device . . . wherein the processing device is mounted to the slidably supported structure and includes a processing head having a tip for engaging either of the side walls and the bottom of the concave portion, the processing device being vertically pivotally supported by the slidably supported structure so that the tip of the processing head contacts the bottom of the concave portion to follow the configuration of the bottom of the concave portion only by the gravity force of the processing head

Amended independent claim 25 recites, inter alia:

An apparatus for processing a portion of a workpiece . . . comprising . . . a processing device . . . wherein the processing device is mounted to the slidably supported structure and includes a processing head having a tip for engaging either of the side walls and the bottom of the concave portion, the processing device being vertically

pivottally supported by the slidably supported structure so that the tip of the processing head contacts the bottom of the concave portion to follow the configuration of the bottom of the concave portion only by the gravity force of the processing head

Applicants submit that the invention of Krueger et al. cannot anticipate amended independent claims 1 and 25 because it does not teach each and every element of these claims. See MPEP § 2131. The Office Action dated July 28, 2006 indicates that Krueger et al. disclose a processing head capable of moving in the substantially longitudinal direction relative to and along the concave portion of the automobile body or workpiece while also the being forced to move in the widthwise direction through contact of the tip with the side walls of the concave portion in response to change in course of the concave portion when the slidably supported structure is moved relative to the automobile body or workpiece. See Office Action, 7/28/06, pp. 3–5. Furthermore, the Examiner stated in an email dated November 27, 2006 to Applicants' representatives that the limitation in claims 1 and 25, wherein the processing head is capable of changing its course of movement in response to being forced to move via the tip of the processing head contacting either of the side walls of a concave portion, defines an intended method use which Krueger et al. is capable of performing and appears to disclose. In that email correspondence, the Examiner also indicated that the piston structure in Krueger et al. provides some capability to move, i.e., compliance, in response to the particular features of the material worked upon and such capability to move is identical or substantially identical to Applicants' claimed movement, i.e., the compliance allows the tip to track the surface.

However, Krueger et al., are silent as to a “processing device being vertically pivottally supported by the slidably supported structure so that the tip of the processing head contacts the bottom of the concave portion to follow the configuration of the bottom of the concave portion only by the gravity force of the processing head” as now claimed by Applicants.

For at least the above reason, Applicants respectfully submit that Krueger et al. do not teach or suggest each and every element recited in independent claims 1 and 25 or claims 6,

8–9, 12, 44, 47–50, 52–53, 55 and 57–58 depending directly or indirectly therefrom. Accordingly, these claims define patentable subject matter over the cited prior art and Applicants respectfully request withdrawal of this ground of rejection.

Claim Rejections – 35 U.S.C. § 103

Claims 7, 10, 13, 51, 54 and 56 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Krueger et al., U.S. Patent No. 6,649,220 B1 or Krueger et al., WO 00/21684 in view of Clitheros et al., U.S. Patent No. 4,564,410. Claims 1, 6–10, 12–13, 25, 44 and 47–58 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Clitheros et al. in view of Krueger et al. Applicants respectfully submit that the pending claims are patentably distinct from the cited references, taken either alone or in combination.

In Krueger et al., a first cylinder (32) applies a downward pressing force to an applicator (47) for maintaining the applicator (47) in contact with an object (71). See Krueger et al., col. 7, l. 39–col. 8, l. 21. If the force applied by the first cylinder (32) is too large, the object may be damaged by the applicator (47). On the other hand, if the force applied by the first cylinder (32) is too small, the applicator (47) may not appropriately follow the configuration of the object (71). The arrangement of Krueger et al., therefore, requires that the pressing force applied by the first cylinder (32) be appropriately controlled by adjusting the biasing pressure differential of the fluid supplied to either side of the piston in the first cylinder (32).

In contrast, Applicants' invention discloses a “processing device . . . ***vertically pivotally supported***” by the “slidably supported structure so that the tip of the processing head contacts the bottom of the concave portion to follow the configuration of the bottom of the concave portion ***only by the gravity force*** of the processing head.” (emphasis added). According to amended claims 1 and 25, the processing head vertically pivots about the slidably supported structure in response to changes in the level of the bottom of the concave portion and maintains contact with the bottom of the concave portion based solely upon the force of gravity.

Moreover, unlike the arrangement in Krueger et al. requiring adjustment of the biasing pressure differential, the vertically pivotal mechanism of the processing head in Applicants' invention requires no adjustment of the pressing force. Advantageously, the tip of the processing head of the vertically pivotal processing device may contact the bottom of the concave portion while the processing head is positioned diagonal to the bottom of the concave portion such that only a lower part of the tip of the processing head will contact the bottom of the concave portion and the remaining upper part of the tip does not contact the bottom of the concave portion. In turn, a space is ensured between the remaining upper part of the tip of the bottom of the concave portion so as to allow a sufficient amount of coating material to be smoothly discharged from the tip opening.

The Office Action dated July 28, 2006 also rejects independent claims 1 and 25 as being unpatentable over Clitheros et al. in view of Krueger et al. Clitheros et al. disclose an invention directed to preventing the application of an excessive amount of adhesive material to a workpiece. See Clitheros et al., col. 2, ll. 1–6. Clitheros et al. disclose a dispenser means having a nozzle (16) and being movable via to a rigid framework of threaded (32) and unthreaded (30) guide rails rotated by drive motors (44, 74). See Clitheros et al., col. 2, ll. 12–19. Like Krueger et al., however, Clitheros et al. are silent as to a “processing device being vertically pivotally supported by the slidably supported structure so that the tip of the processing head contacts with the bottom of the concave portion to follow the configuration of the bottom of the concave portion only by the gravity force of the processing head.” Quite differently, Clitheros et al. impart motion to the nozzle (16) using a rigid framework of threaded (32) and unthreaded (30) guide rails. Specifically, support block (28) is threadably engaged with screw-threaded guide rail (32) such that nozzle (16) will move in a widthwise direction only if guide rail (32) is rotatably driven. Clitheros et al. does not disclose, teach or suggest a processing head that vertically pivotal capabilities as disclosed in the instant Application.

For at least the above reasons, Applicants respectfully submit that Krueger et al. and Clitheros et al., taken either alone or in combination, do not disclose, teach or suggest each and every element recited in amended independent claims 1 and 25. Therefore, these claims, as well as claims 6–10, 12–13, 44 and 47–58 depending therefrom, are patentably distinct from Krueger et al. and Clitheros et al. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request withdrawal of these grounds of rejection.

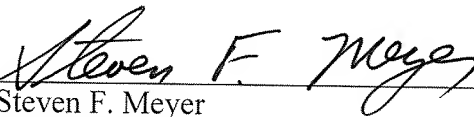
For at least the above reasons, Applicants respectfully submit that Krueger et al. and Clitheros et al., taken either alone or in combination, do not disclose, teach or suggest each and every element recited in amended independent claims 1 and 25. Therefore, these claims, as well as claims 6-10, 12-13, 44 and 47-58 depending therefrom, are patentably distinct from Krueger et al. and Clitheros et al. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request withdrawal of these grounds of rejection.

CONCLUSION

Based on the foregoing remarks, Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection of claims and allowance of this application.

Respectfully submitted,
MORGAN & FINNEGAN, L.L.P.

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By: 
Steven F. Meyer
Registration No. 35,613

Mailing Address:
MORGAN & FINNEGAN, L.L.P.
3 World Financial Center
New York, New York 10281-2101
(212) 415-8700 Telephone
(212) 415-8701 Facsimile